OFFICE OF THE MISSOURI SECRETARY OF STATE
LOCAL RECORDS PRESERVATION PROGRAM, MISSOURI STATE ARCHIVES

Missouri Local Government Records Management Guidelines

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INTRODUCTION

Modern society operates on records. A person is born; a record is generated. That person goes to school; more records are generated. You get a job; records are generated. When you die; records are generated. Records are ubiquitous: visit a doctor, apply for a permit/license, get married, buy property, go to court, vote—records are generated. Just imagine if you could not prove your identity or that you own your car/house/property or that you attended school—chaos would ensue. If this occurred on a large scale, society would grind to a halt. Modern society relies on records to function. Rather than hyperbole, this is actually an understatement, and it is not well understood by the citizenry and many public officials. The cost of maintaining this order is enormous; one study found that 58 percent of government and education workers spend half of each working day filing, deleting or sorting (i.e., managing) paper and electronic records at an estimated cost of over $30 billion annually. This is just for public records; it does not include the records of private employers and other organizations. So it should be readily apparent that creating and following a good records management policy is essential to the administration of any public office. Inefficiencies lead to wasted work time and work space (i.e., wasted money) and hinder public access to records.

In Missouri, public records are governed under two statutes—**RSMo 109** and **RSMo 610**. "The State and Local Records Law"—Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri (RSMo) Chapter 109.200-109.310—established the Missouri State Archives and State Records Management (1965), within the Office of the Secretary of State, to manage the official records of the State of Missouri. In 1972, RSMo 109.255 authorized the creation of the Local Records Board, to judge what local records should be retained, preserved, or destroyed and to provide records management guidance to local officials. This law forms the basis for the management of all public records in the State of Missouri. Unlike RSMo 610, the "Sunshine Law," RSMo 109 does not deal with public access to records; its provisions authorize the Secretary of State's office to set minimum retention and reproduction standards for public records.

In 1989 the General Assembly authorized the Local Records Preservation Program to assist local governments in preserving historical and vital records and recommend techniques for the efficient management of current records. To that end, Local Records staff works with local governments to:

- dispose of extraneous records based on retention schedules
- create computerized record inventories
- reclaim office space through preservation microfilming
- conduct workshops in records and archival management practices
- co-sponsor grant projects
- facilitate disaster planning

These activities promote long-term public records management, improve public access to the records, preserve the social compact and ensure transparency of government activity.

Since 1990, Local Records has accounted for the creation of over 53,000 reels of microfilm, more than 20,000 through its highly successful grant program that has provided more than $6.5 million to preserve the long-term and permanent records of Missouri's local governments and local tax supported entities. Local Records staff have produced record inventories for 773 offices throughout the state and performed thousands of onsite records consultations.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS MANAGEMENT—THE LIFE CYCLE OF RECORDS

Missouri local governments generate records documenting the rights of citizens, government actions, and the history of the community. They are essential to the operation of local government, providing information to public servants in their official capacities and as proof of efficient use of public resources. Local government records are a public trust, and constitute an important cultural and historical asset.

Proper management of these records is an inherent, though often poorly understood, duty of every public official. To that end, Missouri's Local Records Preservation Program works to improve long-term local public records by advising, educating, and encouraging the custodians of those records in the use of sound records management and archival practices.

The core of proper records management is to understand the 4-part "Life Cycle" of records.

1. Creation of Records

information is received or generated for the first time

2. Use of Records

time period during which a record is regularly referred to during course of business

3. Storage of Records

documents needed infrequently but still retain, fiscal, legal, or administrative value

4. Destroy or Archive based on retention

record no longer has business value, but may have enduring legal or historic value

Or

RECORDS MANAGEMENT—BAD PRACTICES

Typically, offices do a good job of managing the creation and use of records. But when records become semi-active or inactive offices sometimes stray from the path of good records management. It becomes a case of "out of sight, out of mind" until there is no place to store new records; then it becomes a crisis.

The storage of records serves not just to create space for current records; the stored records must remain accessible—they are being stored because they still have some business/legal value. After a given time, 95-99% of records lose all of their legal/business value and should be destroyed. The remaining 1-5% retain some enduring legal, business, or historical value and must be preserved. The Local Records retention schedules define how long a given record should be kept. There are no legal consequences for destroying records that have met their retention period, assuming there is no pending litigation.

Often, local officials and office managers adopt more stringent retention schedules. This is fine; the Local Records schedules present the minimum retention. However, it is common to keep records beyond their minimum retention, "just in case." "Just in case" is not a retention; it is bad records management and bad policy. If a record is kept beyond its retention period, it must still be managed. Any record that is kept past its retention date remains a public record and is subject to public inspection and/or legal discovery during litigation. By keeping a record beyond its retention period, the only thing accomplished is increased expense for storage space and staff time—two items that are rarely abundant in public offices.

Other bad practices include: not having a record storage area, not devoting enough space to record storage, "maintaining" a disorderly records area, and not having a written records management policy.

So, what does bad records management look like?

Figure 1: Poorly organized and/or unidentified records haphazardly thrown into a room and on shelves. How long would it take to find a given record in these circumstances? Records management should be an integral part of the daily routine of the office, conducted as a normal part of business.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT—GOOD PRACTICES

There are a number of steps to follow in establishing a records management program.

1. Inventory and appraise records
2. Create retention schedules
3. Manage active and inactive records
4. Identify and protect vital records
5. Store permanent records/create preservation copies (e.g., microfilm)
6. Develop and maintain a disaster preparedness program

The first two steps have been, and continue to be, done for Missouri's local government entities. The Secretary of State's office has been charged with establishing minimum retention periods for local government records for nearly forty years. For over twenty years, the Local Records Program has performed records inventories in a variety of offices. Record series and titles have been identified in nearly 800 local government offices. These inventories can be found in the Local Records Inventory Database and form the basis for the Local Records retention schedules adopted by the Local Records Board. When new record series are created or discovered, they are appraised and scheduled. You will still need to determine what records are in your possession, but much of the record identification and retention work has already been done.

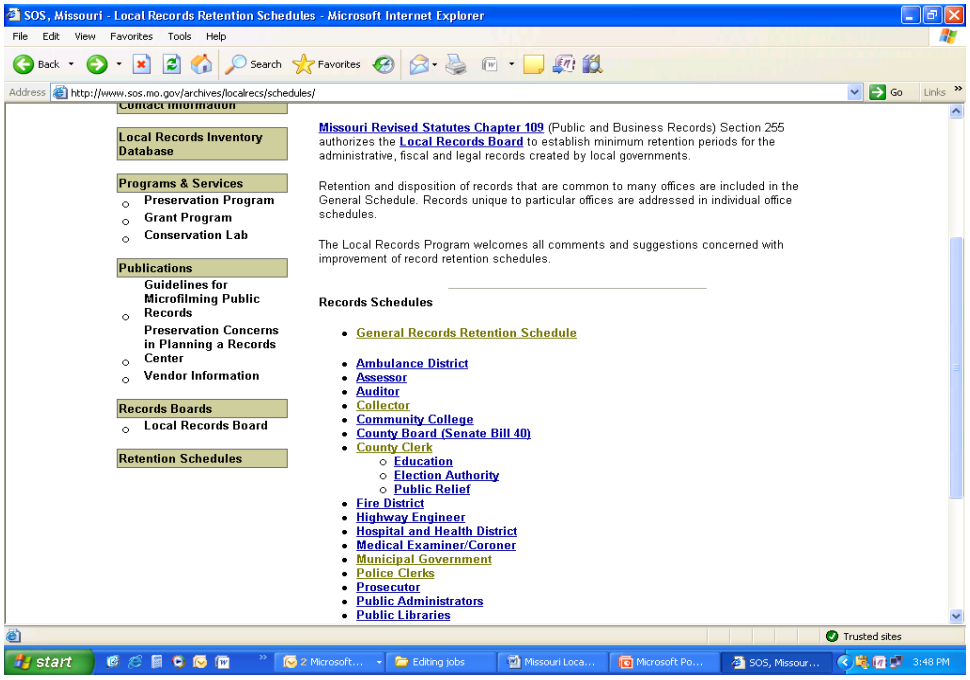

Figure 2: Local Records Retention Schedule webpage

"That is all great," you say, "but where does that leave me," an official/manager/clerk, "in my official capacity?" Well, it positions you to take control of your office's records. By reading this guide you are taking the first steps toward sound records management practices. The Local Records webpage is a good source for more information. Local Records archivists are located around the state and are available for

no cost, on-site records management consultations. While their limited number restrict how much work they can perform for an individual office (i.e., they will not go through and apply the retention schedules to your records and throw them away for you), they can provide guidance on records management practices, and they can work with your staff to better manage records.

USING THE RETENTION SCHEDULES

Every office will use at least two retention schedules: the **General Schedule**, which covers Administrative, Building, Financial, Legal and Personnel records common to all offices; and, an office specific schedule(s). The schedules can be found at www.sos.mo.gov/archives/localrecs/schedules.

The retention schedules are generally arranged alphabetically by record series and subseries—providing an easy way to find records and, possibly, a new way to file records. The current schedules are organized like the selection below: series title, followed by a listing of other names for the record, and descriptions of its function and content. Older schedules that have not been fully revised and reformatted will only have the name of the record series and the retention period. By adopting retention schedule headings as file headings you will have already separated record series and differing retentions.

Here is an example from the General Record Retention Schedule:

GS 001 Annual and Special Reports

Also Called:	
Function:	Reports documenting the program or primary activities and accomplishments of the local government unit for the previous year. Often compiled from monthly, quarterly or other subsidiary activity reports.
Content:	May include: statistics, narratives, graphs, diagrams, and similar information.
Minimum Retention:	Permanent
Disposition:	Archive. Microfilm for preservation
Note:	Provides administrative history of the office.
Approval Date:	August 15, 2001

GS 012 Correspondence - General

Also Called:	Letters, Memoranda
Function:	Correspondence that pertains to routine matters handled in accordance with existing policies and procedures. Does not contain significant information about office policies or programs.
Content:	May include: incoming and outgoing letters, memoranda, notes, acknowledgements, notices, requests for information or publications, enclosures, and attachments.
Minimum Retention:	1 year
Disposition:	Destroy
Note:	See also Correspondence - Policy
Approval Date:	August 15, 2001

GS 013 Correspondence - Policy

Also Called:	Letters, Memoranda
Function:	Correspondence which state or form the basis of policy, set important precedents or record important events in the operational and organizational history of the governmental body.
Content:	May include: incoming and outgoing letters, memoranda, notes, reports studies, and other records.
Minimum Retention:	Permanent
Disposition:	Archive. Microfilm for preservation
Note:	See also Correspondence - General
Approval Date:	August 15, 2001

GS 014 Mailing Lists

Function:	Lists complied to facilitate billing, official notification, etc.
Content:	May include: name of individual, group or business, address, name and title of contact person, telephone number, comments and similar data.
Minimum Retention:	Destroy when superseded or obsolete
Disposition:	Destroy

You can see that retentions vary greatly—annual reports are permanent records, while mailing lists can be destroyed when they are no longer of use. Note: there are multiple entries for correspondence, based

on what information that correspondence contains. It is important that you categorize correspondence at creation, otherwise you will end up with a considerable mess and everything will become a "permanent" record because it is easier than sorting the material after it is filed.

In addition to separating records by series, you should record the retention period/destruction date on the outside of the folder—preferably high on the front, or on the tab, so as to facilitate quick retrieval from file drawers. Once a record has become "inactive" and is removed to storage, it should be stored with like records, with the destruction date written on the outside of the box—do not mix record series/retentions within a box. For example, if a box has General Correspondence, all one year records, then all of the records in the box should be General Correspondence. If mixing series absolutely cannot be helped, then all of the records in the box should have the same retention period/destruction date to facilitate destruction. You do not want to dig through boxes to find files that have met their retention period. You just want to pull a box off the shelf and dispose of it.

One caveat—personnel records are 75-year records; yes, you have to keep that personnel file for 75 years from date of hire. If you file these by hire date, you will never find them in the future. In this case, you should organize alphabetically and write the hire date and destruction date on the outside of the folder. Then as you actively manage the records, you can periodically check the personnel files for any that can be destroyed. You may also separately box the files of individuals no longer in your employ for long-term storage.

CREATING A RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Local Records Retention Schedules, RSMo 109 and RSMo 610 provide valuable information for establishing a records management policy for your office. The retention schedules provide the minimum retention for the records, RSMo 109 outlines the statutory obligations associated with public records, and RSMo 610, the Sunshine Law, deals with public access to information. The three are intertwined—each important in its own right. None supersedes another—if a record has met its retention period and is destroyed, RSMo 610 does not apply. If, however, a record has met its retention and is kept, RSMo 610 remains in force.

It is important that each office adopt a records management policy and follow it as a regular part of business. Managing the records generated by an office is just as important as any of the other duties assigned to an office. It is not "extra" work. It is part of the job.

To this end, an office should have written guidelines. If none currently exist, guidelines should be formulated and everyone associated with generating and accessing records should be familiar with them.

Records Management Policy: This document will outline the official policy of the office. It should:

1. Spell out the responsibilities of the office staff and identify what person/position is the responsible record liaison. Every office needs a person to coordinate its records management efforts.
2. Establish a procedure to remove inactive records from prime, office storage space to long term storage.
3. Develop a way to find boxes in storage, whether it is a simple shelf location list or a detailed record inventory/spreadsheet/database.

4. Detail when/how records will be destroyed. It is recommended that records are reviewed for destruction at least annually. Specify how/where you record what records were destroyed, and how they were destroyed. Records management records are permanent records; the list of records destroyed should include—record series, dates of records, date destroyed, and retention schedule reference. That list should be entered into the County/City/Board minutes, which are also permanent records.
5. Detail how permanent and historically valuable records will be preserved.

In addition to, or as a part of, the Records Management Policy, you may wish to standardize how records are filed by the office staff.

Filing system: There are no set rules, but ease of retrieval and ease of disposal/retention should be paramount. Each year the oldest office files should be boxed and moved to inactive storage. Keep in mind, especially once records are inactive and boxed, that minimal handling is preferable. Boxes and folders should be clearly marked. You should not have to look into a box or folder to know what it contains.

Some points to keep in mind:

1. **Avoid unnecessary filing**. Filing unnecessary papers is a waste of labor, space, and equipment.
2. **Arrange folders, guides and labels correctly**. Orderly appearance and efficiency depends upon the careful preparation, use, and arrangement of folders and guides in the file drawer or shelf. Folders are necessary to keep the papers together and in order. Guides serve as "sign posts" to help speed up filing and retrieving.
3. **Receiving and preparing papers for filing**. The following steps should be taken in preparing documents for filing:
    a. Remove sticky notes, rubber bands, paper clips, and other temporary fasteners.
    b. Determine if the file is complete and all necessary enclosures and attachments are present.
4. **Extra copies.** File only one copy in the official file. Destroy extra copies immediately unless there is a requirement to retain them. When extra copies must be retained, file them separately from the official copy. For instance, in a separate consecutive folder labeled as "Copy."
5. **Placing materials in file folders.** The material should be filed in the appropriate folder with the top of the sheet toward the left of the file drawer as the reader faces it. In this manner, all filed documents can be easily read. Filing should be done uniformly with the most recent documents placed either at the front or the back of the folder.
6. **Checking out material from the files.** When records are removed from a file and forwarded to an individual or office, generate a record of this action. Proper and consistent use of a file "charge-out" record (also known as "check-out" or "out" cards) will eliminate wasted effort in searching for documents. A file charge-out record should be filled out (name of person borrowing file, date, and contact information) and put in the folder, file drawer or shelf in place of the withdrawn material. Place it in the exact location of the withdrawn material with the "OUT" portion clearly visible. The record custodian should review the charge-out forms periodically and request the return of files that have been out for a long time.
7. **Maintaining the files.** Neatness counts! File drawers/boxes should be clearly identified. Drawers and boxes should not be overfilled. Drawers should have 3-4 inches of working space. Boxes should not be tightly packed, you should be able to easily slip a hand between

folders and touch the bottom of the box. Keep papers straight within the folders—do not have documents extending beyond the end of folders. Do not overfill file folders—an individual standard folder should be no more than ¾ inches thick, if you have more papers, make another folder.

Adopting, implementing, and actually following these guidelines will make managing records easier, especially in the years to come, and will provide some protection from legal challenge. If it can be demonstrated that records were destroyed properly, during the normal course of business, there is no recourse under the Sunshine Law. You have done your job. This does not, however, allow records subject to pending litigation to be destroyed.

A note on storage boxes: It is recommended that standard 10" x 12" x 15" boxes (i.e., cubic foot boxes) be used for record storage. These have fold-in flaps on the top and bottom and may have hand holes. The boxes require tape along the mid-line seam and can handle considerable weight. This style is the most economical option. They also save space and are easier to shelve in comparison to lidded, or bankers boxes. So-called "bankers boxes" with lids are much more expensive, the lids take up space—i.e., fewer boxes can be stored on a shelf, and it is inevitable that the lid will become dislodged and will get caught on shelves. Also, boxes larger that one cubic foot are difficult to move when filled because of their weight and often buckle and collapse in the middle.

Figure 3: Example of cubic foot record storage box. The box is typically stored flat. From left: open box, tape bottom of box, ready to fill

Box labeling should be uniform, on both ends (so as to be visible when on shelf). Should include:

Department /office	example:	City Clerk
Record Series		Accounts Payable
Inclusive Dates		1988/01-1988/12
Retention		Completion of Audit
Disposal Date		[date records eligible for destruction]
Box Number		[numerical identifier: Box 1, 2, etc.; Box 1 of 2, etc.]

If box labeling is done by hand, use a dark marker. Often people write the information in pencil or pen—this makes the boxes very hard to read, especially in areas without good lighting.

Why, you ask, should you go to the trouble of writing the name of the department/office on the box? Because more often than not, record storage areas house the records of multiple offices and even when areas are specifically designated for a particular office, it is not uncommon for boxes from other offices to "migrate" into that space. Let's face it: people are more likely to look for an empty shelf than to

rearrange boxes in a designated area. The practice of putting records in another office's area should be strongly discouraged, but by identifying the originating office on the box, you can at least find your records in the morass.

Computer-generated labels can be used to create a quick and easy labeling template. Uniform labeling also makes record disposition easier. Staff can just walk along the aisle and mark boxes ready for destruction, transferring the information from the box label onto a records disposal list.

RECORDS DISPOSITION

Destruction of Records

As stated above, records disposal should be done as part of the normal course of business. Be sure to create a list of records destroyed. This list and the authorization to destroy the records become a permanent record. This may be maintained in the office or, preferably, in the official minutes of the county/city/board.

The method of destruction is left up to the office—there is no statutory mandate outlining the method of destruction. Confidential records must be destroyed in a manner that makes the information unrecoverable. Typical methods of destruction include: shredding, burning, and pulping/chemical destruction. A list of vendors that offer destruction services can be found on the Local Records website.

Preserving/Archiving Records

For most offices, a very small percentage of records must be kept long-term (50, 75, or more years) or permanently because of legal, administrative, or historical value. This is another reason for adopting and following a sound records management policy. Every office will have records from preceding administrations that must continue to be managed. And succeeding administrations will be charged with managing records generated today. The responsibility of managing long-term and permanent records lies with the current administration. It is strongly recommended that long-term and permanent records be microfilmed for preservation. Once a record has been microfilmed, the paper record may be destroyed. Microfilm is the most cost efficient means of preserving long term and permanent records, especially considering the cost of storage space.

"Microfilm? But this is the twenty-first century!" This is a common response; it seems everyone wants to scan their records and have them instantly available on the computer. This is not unreasonable, but there is a difference between preserving records and providing access to records. The former ensures that a record is maintained for the future (i.e., properly storing paper/tapes/etc., or creating microfilm); the latter refers to actually using the record (i.e., pulling up the record on your computer for quick, immediate review). The Local Records Program does not recommend scanning paper records for long term preservation—even "born" electronic records (i.e., records that are never put to paper) can be written to microfilm. Scanning takes at least as much time as microfilming and preservation quality image formats—TIFFs—are large files that quickly take up a great deal of server space.

The basic prep required for scanning and microfilming is the same—you must organize the records being imaged and, if you are scanning, you must create an index in order to find the documents later. The benefit of microfilm is permanency—properly stored, silver-microfilm masters will last for 500 years and, from that master, many duplicate rolls of film can be produced. Microfilm is very low tech—in an emergency, if the power is out, you can still access microfilm with a flashlight and magnifying glass. If microfilm is caught in a flood, it can be washed and salvaged. Without power, or in a flood, a computer is just a box. Once a document is on microfilm, it can be accessed for as long as that microfilm exists. Electronic records are subject to media and software changes (i.e., there will be continuing costs as electronic images have to be migrated to new media) and you very well may not be able to open that file in a few years if you do not make the effort to migrate the data to new storage media (and possibly software). For example, how many 8", 5.25" or 3.5" floppy disks have you seen recently? Do you even have appropriate drives in your computer, much less the software to look at the data stored on these devices?

Scanning/Capture: Ease of Access

Digital imaging is a marvelous technology. Everyone wants to be able to pull all of their documents up on their computers—it is quick and convenient. That said, Local Records does not recommend that local government agencies purchase scanning equipment and start digitizing all of their old records as a means of preservation.

Why, you ask? First, while the equipment may be relatively inexpensive, large-scale storage of digital images can become very expensive. Most local governments cannot afford this solution. In addition, you may be increasing your workload, two-fold, or more (depending on the system you select). Think about it, you originally generated and processed a paper document. Now you will have to scan that same document, check the image quality, and index it in a spreadsheet/database. Seriously, how many offices have the time and staffing to keep current with ongoing work and to potentially double the amount of time spent with an old record? Also, if an office scans everything, how will you apply retentions—there will be both short- and long-term records floating around on, hopefully, servers, and, just like paper records, if you do not destroy records when they meet retention, you remain responsible for maintaining and producing those records.

If you wish to establish a "paperless" office, the preferable approach is to switch your business operations away from paper and maintain "born" electronic records, without the intermediate step of paper. Older long-term and permanent records can be microfilmed. If you want the digital access, many vendors can scan microfilm to produce access images—it is still necessary to index the images, but you derive the benefit of security along with ease of access. Some vendors do offer conversion of digital images to microfilm; if you wish to scan from the original paper documents. The key thing to keep in mind is you do want microfilm of your long term records.

Figure 4: left, a computer workstation and high speed scanner; right, a flatbed scanner

However, if you insist on scanning records, there are file format standards that should be observed.

Tagged Image File Format, or TIFF. TIFF is a venerable standard, a lossless format (i.e., when the file is compressed, no data is lost). TIFF can be used for black and white or color images, and can accommodate a multipage document in a single file.

Portable Document Format (PDF). Because of this flexibility, PDF has been a de facto standard for many years. PDFs can be generated from original electronic documents, JPEGs or TIFFs.

Portable Document Format/A (PDF/A). PDF/A is an archival standard that captures all of the original document data, right down to the font, and, like the PDF files that everyone is familiar with can be opened on any computer with the reader, which is free, regardless of whether or not the computer supports the source document. PDF/A is essentially a more robust PDF—ensuring that the document will always be rendered in its original formatting—through the capture of all the document metadata. For most office documents, this will be overkill. The primary benefit of PDF/A is that a document will present with the same appearance as the original source document.

JPEG2000. JPEG200 is a lossless file format that is poised to become a standard.

Storage of Paper and Microfilm Records-Environment

Two things to keep in mind for long-term record storage are temperature and relative humidity. The most important factor in record storage areas is consistency of temperature and humidity, as all record media are damaged by great fluctuations of temperature and humidity. Excessive heat can cause paper and microfilm to become brittle, while high humidity promotes mold growth, which can rot paper and

leather and breakdown the composition of microfilm. In addition, mold is a health risk. Therefore, you should avoid storing records in attics, basements, garages, and warehouses that lack climate control.

All heat increases media degradation, so the lower the temperature, the better. Since most office record storage areas are "mixed-use"—meaning they also serve as work areas—the temperature should be set at 70° Fahrenheit and the relative humidity should be between 30% and 50% (20% to 30% for master microfilm). Temperature and humidity variation should be with ±2°and ±3% a day. For less often accessed storage areas, lower temperatures will increase the longevity of the media.

Avoid storing records in direct sunlight. All light is damaging to media, and this damage is cumulative and irreversible. Ultraviolet (UV) light is especially harmful and is strongest in sunlight and fluorescent light. Blinds and UV filters will mitigate the effects of UV light, to an extent.

For more information about environmental concerns in record storage areas/facilities, please see *Preservation Concerns in Planning a Record Center*, available from the Local Records website.

DISASTER PLANNING

The protection and preservation of local government records is essential to the maintenance of government functions. Let's face it:, the best disaster is the one that doesn't happen. Therefore, disaster prevention should be a high priority for every office. To prevent a disaster from damaging your records, you must first recognize potential hazards. These threats include damage caused by fire, water, and theft. With these in mind, here are some things to consider.

DISASTER PREVENTION

Fire. The prevention of fire is probably the single most important factor in safeguarding records. You can approach the problem by (1) minimizing the chances that a fire will start and (2) maximizing the chances of extinguishing it. The first approach is the easiest and least expensive. The best fire is the one that does not start. If you are unfortunate and a fire does occur, then you must rely on your fire suppression system/fire department. Be aware, however, that your fire disaster will be compounded by the water used to put out the fire. Basic fire protection tips include:

- No smoking in the record storage area.
- Do not store records with chemicals, cleaning supplies, or other combustible materials.
- Keep the record storage area neat and police it regularly.
- Do not store records by the furnace, radiator, or heater.
- Have regular safety inspections: make sure wiring is safe, follow all local fire, electrical, plumbing, heating and construction codes.
- Do not rely on fireproof cabinets. These cabinets will survive the fire, but they get so hot the records inside will burn anyway—but the cabinet will be fine.
- Install fire detection systems—wired to a central monitoring station. 77% of fires are attributed to arson and 88% of fires occur between 5 p.m. and 9 a.m., so basic smoke detectors and manually operated fire alarms are not sufficient.
- Install automatic sprinklers
- Have fire extinguishers checked at regular intervals. Show your staff where they are located and train staff how to use them.

Figure 5: Mississippi County Courthouse, destroyed by arson fire, 1997

Water. Most record disasters involve water. Water damage to records occurs when storage areas flood, sewers back-up, overhead water pipes break, or sprinkler systems or hoses are used to extinguish fires. When possible, do not store records under water pipes, and keep records at least 4 inches off the floor.

Theft. Limit access to the record storage area to staff. Lock record storage areas and limit access. Change locks as necessary. Check the building to make sure it is empty before locking up for the night.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

A disaster can be any event of unexpected timing which produces destructive results. In order to be prepared for the unexpected:

a. Determine what records you have in your care
b. Identify the location of each record series
c. Decide which records have priority as being "vital" or "essential" to continuing operations
d. Know whom to contact for emergency help or supplies in order to restore your operation and perform your normal services. The Local Records Preservation Program can provide some advice, especially if contacted early in the event—i.e., don't wait three days after the flood to call; your records will be a wreck and mold will be growing. For assistance, please call 573.751.9047 or 573.526.3866. In addition, Local Records has compiled a Vendor list which includes listings for Disaster Planning and Disaster Recovery vendors
e. Decide who will have what responsibilities in various emergency situations and develop a contact list that includes work, home, and cell phone numbers. A good template is available from the North East Document Conservation Center (NEDCC).

Each agency should tailor a vital records plan that fits its individual needs and function. Local officials should consider duplicating that information which is deemed vital and which cannot be recreated from any other source. A security copy of these records (microfilm, paper, computer files) should be stored off-site. Arrangements can often be made to store information in local bank vaults. Local agencies are also encouraged to store security copies of microfilmed records in the Missouri State Archives.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS

In recent years, the Local Records Program has seen the number of inquiries involving electronic records increase dramatically. A key principle to remember is that records management is the same for electronic and paper records. Our number one electronic records question is always about e-mail, and it is answered below. The remaining sections deal with Electronic Record Management (ERM) systems and standards and Enterprise Content Management (ECM). These sections are meant to educate you about these topics to provide a knowledge baseline for dealing with your IT Department (if you have one) and vendors.

Records are records, regardless of format. Therefore, there should be no difference between managing paper and electronic records. The same policies, procedures, and retentions apply. In many ways, however, electronic records are more difficult to manage. With paper records the primary issue is physical space. Physical space is much less of an issue for electronic records, though if you decide to scan paper records those images will rapidly consume electronic storage space. With electronic records you have a number of other issues:

1. How do you categorize/find the record when it is not in a filing cabinet, or box? How will you find a record if it is accidentally misidentified? You will not have the luxury of browsing through a drawer.
2. Is it trustworthy (i.e., is it authentic, is it original, is it reliable, and is it secure)? You need to track versions and changes to documents to show that they were created when purported. How will you secure your electronic documents? It is much easier to change an electronic document than a paper document.
3. How much on-going funding is available for service contracts, hardware, and on-going data migration? You are not off the hook cost-wise for record storage. Electronic record storage has on-going costs, unlike physical storage in a building that you own.

RSMo 109.280 grants agency heads the authority to determine the nature and form of their agency records—so, maintaining a "paperless" office is the prerogative of the local official. Local Records has discouraged reliance solely on electronic records over the years because the vast majority of its clients lacked the IT infrastructure to competently manage electronic records; storing records on a local computer, CDs, or floppy disks invites disaster. Local computers (i.e., stand-alone units), though relatively stable, are subject to "crashes" and viruses that can threaten electronic records. In addition, if something happens to that particular computer during a disaster, all of the records stored therein may be lost. Even if the records can be recovered from the hard drive, it may be days or weeks before the records are accessible. Static storage media such as floppy disks, CDs, and DVDs used to temporarily back-up data, or worse, for long-term storage present other problems:

1. Media decay/"bit-rot"—Old magnetic storage media, such as floppy disks, are impacted over time and data is compromised. Optical media that you "burn" information to, such as CDs/DVDs, are subject to degradation as the metallic ink in the media breaks down over time. The typical lifespan of CD/DVDs is about 10 years under optimal storage conditions. Note: the commercial music and movie CD/DVDs purchased in stores are not produced by "burning;" rather, they are pressed, like vinyl records, and are not subject to the same instability.

2. Hardware obsolescence—Floppy disks have been mentioned numerous times in this manual, but how many people actually have a working 3.5" floppy disk drive in their computer? How about 5.25"? CDs are increasingly being replaced by DVDs. What is next? Do you remember 8-track tapes and Beta-video cassettes?

Figure 6: Typical office computer storage media

Modern IT operations of networked computers—where the electronic records are maintained on active servers and regularly backed-up—have mitigated many of the hardware and storage issues of electronic records. Records are kept "online," not on local computers, creating greater stability and security for record storage. Software obsolescence has not materialized as a major obstacle to maintaining electronic records, though it is something to keep in mind—avoid proprietary software. You should, however, adopt strategies for migrating data to updated software as it becomes available.

If you do not have the ability or resources to maintain electronic records online, and you do resort to storing them on CDs/DVDs, then:

1. Make multiple copies and store one copy offsite, at a minimum in a different building—preferably 10 or more miles away.
2. Develop a migration plan to "refresh" (i.e., transfer) the data to a new CD/DVD every five to ten years. Be sure to include the offsite copies in the migration plan.

Electronic records are not a panacea for records management issues. The records management principles are the same, and the retentions are the same. Electronic records systems are actually more complicated to set up than dealing with boxes, paper, and shelves, primarily because the records require hardware and software to access them. You will have to decide how electronic records will be classified and indexed. Will they serve as the official record? When do they become inactive? How will long-term and permanent records be archived? How will they be destroyed/purged? If you resort to CDs/DVDs as your primary means of storage, you have to be cognizant of the retention of the records stored on them. If you have records with different retentions stored on the same CD, the media must be retained for the longer period, so you will be maintaining some records well beyond their retention—records for which you will have to continue to provide reference services.

E-MAIL

One of the most common questions Local Records receives is: "What is the retention for e-mail?" Our reply is that e-mail is a system that delivers messages—no different than paper. If a message is not a record when it is delivered on paper, it is not a record when it is delivered electronically. The content of the message determines whether or not it is a record. E-mail is categorized as a record/non-record in the same way as every other document: someone consciously categorizes it. Permanent correspondence (i.e., e-mail) is defined in the retention schedule as: "*Correspondence which state or form the basis of policy, set important precedents or record important events in the operational and organizational history of the governmental body.*" Given this definition, any e-mails that would need to be retained permanently would most likely run through the managers of a given organization. Therefore, if it comes down to a question of whose e-mail should definitely be captured by an e-mail management system; it should be those of the elected officials, administrators, and other policy makers.

On occasion the question is raised: "How can we allow an individual to determine if an e-mail is a record?" This is a naïve question. We entrust individual employees to make that exact same determination with paper documents every day. We also entrust them to conduct official business in person, over the phone and by computer. Employees operate cars, trucks, and heavy equipment in the course of their employment. They keep the electricity running and the water flowing. A tremendous amount of trust is placed in the employees. The key is that they are trained to perform these job functions. Employees must be trained to classify e-mails under the appropriate retention.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT (ERM)

Let it be stated up-front:

IF YOU CANNOT MANAGE PAPER RECORDS, YOU CANNOT MANAGE ELECTRONIC RECORDS!

The principles governing electronic records are the same as for paper records—the rules do not change based on document media. Also, it is important that the responsibility for managing electronic records not be passed off to the local IT department—whoever is responsible for the paper records should be held responsible for the electronic records (preferably a manager). It is important to collaborate with IT on electronic records issues, but managing your records is not their purpose. IT's role is to collaborate on network infrastructure, not content or access. If your county/city/agency does not have an IT specialist or department, then it will be up to you to educate yourself. You must have a basic understanding of computers to work effectively and competently with vendors.

In dealing with IT, it is also important to understand that there is a vocabulary disconnect. "Archive" means one thing to an IT person and something significantly different to a records manager. More often than not, there is no "permanent" in the IT-world, so it is important for everyone to be on the same page from the beginning of implementation; for instance, there must be a common understanding of the concepts of the Electronic Backup and the Electronic Record Archive. These are two distinct operations.

It may be most easily understood that the Backup is for disaster recovery in order to restore business operations, and the Archive is for long-term data storage.

1. The Backup is a copy of the entire system—both data and operating system. In case of disaster, the backup is used to restart the system—so it does not need to be indexed because it is never used for access. It is meant to provide a restart point. Because of this, backups should be generated on a regular schedule and old backups do not need to be retained (i.e., you can reuse the media).
2. The Archive consists only of copies of data and metadata, not the entire system, and must be indexed in order to be accessible. You look to the data archive, not the system backup, to fulfill records requests. Essentially the electronic record archive is a filing cabinet—you need the records, but you do not need them at your desk. Archives are meant to be holding areas, near- or off-line for the long-term/permanent storage of records (data and metadata), based on assigned retention periods. By archiving records, and removing them from the "production" environment (i.e., the desktop computer) you increase their security and decrease the cost of back-ups (i.e., there is less data to copy for the backup when it only has to reproduce the entire system going back a week, month, or whatever amount of time is deemed appropriate).

The vocabulary must also be communicated to all of the system users as it will form the basis for indexing the electronic records (think box labels from the previous section). The metadata used may be as simple as record series and date, or you may want to include information about the creator, version, editing, disposal, format, language, or title of the record. However, if the metadata scheme is too complex, it becomes a serious burden to the employees. The longer a record must be maintained, the more detailed the metadata must become. Long-term records should include information on the software (including the version of said software) used to create the record.

Trustworthy Electronic Records

It is vitally important that your ERM system is trustworthy (i.e., the records are authentic and reliable). Unlike paper records, unsecured electronic records are very simple to alter. When looking at ERM an system, you will want it to provide:

Authenticity—Who created the record? Is it what it purports to be? Was it created or sent when it appears to have been?
Integrity—Have records been altered?
Reliability—Is the record complete?
Confidentiality—Can access be restricted?
Usability—Can the records be found and presented?

Therefore, the electronic record system will preserve:

Context—who, what, when, where, why of the record
Content—the information within the record
Structure—relationship between parts of the record

ERM SYSTEMS AND STANDARDS

As far as records management software goes, there are a variety of stand-alone and bundled systems available. There are no recommendations for specific systems, but a few things to keep in mind:

1. One comprehensive system will allow you to track your records with greater ease.
2. Likely, you will not need the "best" system; however, make sure whatever system you pick addresses your specific needs.
3. Regardless of what else a system may offer, if it does not have a retention and disposition management component, do not even consider it. Without this component, it is of no use as a records management tool.

A number of industry standards have been established, and should be used when discussing the systems with your vendor. The primary source for standards is the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Whether or not you choose to purchase these standards, you should be aware of their existence, as should any vendor.

ISO 15489, *Information and documentation—Records management, Parts 1-2*
ISO 23081, *Records Management Metadata Standard*

The ISO standards are available for purchase through ISO.org or from the professional records management organization, ARMA International at ARMA.org—**these are not available through the Local Records Program.**

A couple of de facto standards have emerged from the United States Department of Defense and the European Union. If you are serious about maintaining electronic records, you/your records manager/possibly IT should be familiar with these standards. Because they are de facto standards, you can be assured that if an ERM-system is DoD 5115.2 compliant, it will more than meet your needs. These standards are freely available online:

DoD 5015.2, *Electronic Records Management Software Applications Design Criteria Standard*. Freely available online from multiple sources, including: http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/501502std.pdf

MoReq2, *Model Requirements for the Management of Electronic Records, second version*. Developed in 2008 by the European Commission for use in the European Union, it is freely available online from multiple sources, including: http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/archival_policy/moreq/doc/moreq2_spec.pdf

More online information about electronic records and electronic records systems can be found on the websites of ARMA International (http://www.arma.org) and the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) (http://www.aiim.org).

ECM—ENTERPRISE CONTENT MANAGEMENT

Enterprise Content Management (ECM) is often seen as a panacea for an organization's records problems. The issue is, however, that when people speak of ECM, they rarely define just what it is. How is it different from Electronic Records Management (ERM)? The Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) defines ECM as:

The strategies, methods and tools used to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver content and documents related to organizational processes. ECM tools and strategies allow the management of an organization's unstructured information, wherever that information exists.

Essentially, ECM is the amalgamation of several disciplines: Records Management, Document Management, and Digital Imaging and Conversion. ECM is truly an enterprise-wide undertaking, governing both paper and electronic records and information. Numerous vendors offer ECM systems and there are open-source options available. It is important to make sure that any ECM system you choose includes a records management component. For this system to manage electronic records, you must be able to incorporate the retention schedules so the system can know how to categorize and when to delete/purge records.

When you are looking for an ECM system, there are five basic components: Capture, Manage, Store, Preserve, and Deliver.

> Capture allows the system to generate, prepare and process information.
> Manage controls access and retrieval through databases—will provide version control of documents, collaboration on records, records management through indexing and retention schedules,
> Store temporary storage components—not an archive for permanent records
> Preserve long-term safe, stable storage for unchanging documents
> Deliver component used to present the data from Manage, Store and Preserve components

ECM is not the proverbial "silver bullet." One thing that should be clear is that managing electronic records requires significant planning and devotion of resources. When it is fully implemented, it is a tremendous asset—but this is not merely purchasing a scanner and thinking that your records problems are things of the past. If possible, plan to implement your system incrementally so adjustments can be made without too great a disruption to your daily business. It is better to have problems with one area than to have everything come to a crashing halt when nothing works.

DEFINITIONS

Active Records—Records that are used with sufficient frequency to warrant storing them in the office of origin

COA—Completion of Audit, a record retention requiring the record be kept until after an official audit

DCA—Destroy in Current area, a record retention. Series with these retentions are considered "reference" records and may be destroyed when they are no longer of use

ECM—Enterprise Content Management, the strategies, methods and tools used to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver content and documents related to organizational processes

Electronic Backup—A copy of the entire Information Technology (IT) system—data, operating system and applications—used for disaster recovery

Electronic Record Archive—Near- or off-line storage of electronic data and metadata only, used for long-term storage of electronic records

Inactive Records—Records that are used infrequently, but retain legal, historical, or business value

Inventory—The process of surveying the records in a given office, typically at the record series level

Life Cycle—Phases of a record's existence: creation, use, and disposition

Local Record—Any governmental record not created by state or federal offices/agencies

Metadata—Data about data—used to locate or manage information stored electronically. May include information on the creation of a record (who created it, when, file format), subject of the record, keywords, etc.

Non-Record—Per RSMO 109.210(5), material made or acquired and preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes, extra copies of documents preserved only for convenience of reference, and stocks of publications and blank documents. These do not require retention scheduling or destruction authorization or reporting

Permanent—A record retention. Records with this retention must be kept forever in either their original format or on another medium (such as microfilm) that can be maintained forever

Public Record—Per RSMO 610.010(6), any record, whether written or electronically stored, retained by or of any public governmental body including any report, survey, memorandum, or other document prepared for the public governmental body by a consultant paid for in whole or in part by public funds. The term "public record" shall not include any internal memorandum or letter consisting of advice, opinions and recommendations unless such records are retained by the public governmental body or presented at a public meeting

Record—Per RSMO 109.210(5), any document, book, paper, photograph, map, sound recording or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or in connection with the transaction of official business

Records Management—The systematic control of records to ensure efficiency and economy during the life cycle

Record Series—Group of records that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity

Retention Period—Length of time records must be kept

Retention Schedule—Document that identifies and describes an organization's records and indicates how long records must be kept

RSMo 109—Missouri Revised Statutes, Chapter 109: Missouri's Public Records Law

RSMo 610—Missouri Revised Statutes, Chapter 610: Missouri's Sunshine Law

Vital Records— Records essential to the continued functioning or reconstitution of an organization during and after an emergency (emergency operating records). Also those records essential to protecting the legal and financial rights of the organization and of the individuals directly affected by its activities (rights and interest records). Also call Essential Records.

RESOURCES

LOCAL RECORDS WEB RESOURCES

Local Records Preservation Program:
http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/localrecs

Local Records Board:
http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/localrecs/lrboard.asp

Local Records Retention Schedules:
http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/localrecs/schedules

Local Records Inventory Database:
http://www.sos.mo.gov/CountyInventory

Local Records Grant Program:
http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/localrecs/grants

Local Records Vendor List
http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/localrecs/conservation/vendor/vendor.asp

Guidelines for Microfilming Public Records
http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/pubs/mfmg

Preservation Concerns in Planning a Record Center
http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/localrecs/conservation/concerns.asp

Missouri Electronic Records Education and Training Initiative (MERETI)
http://www.sos.mo.gov/records/mereti

MISSOURI REVISED STATUTES—RECORDS

RSMO 109 Public and Business Records
http://www.moga.mo.gov/STATUTES/C109.HTM

RSMO 610 Governmental Bodies and Records (Sunshine Law)
http://www.moga.mo.gov/STATUTES/C610.HTM

ELECTRONIC RECORDS STANDARDS

DoD 5015.2, *Electronic Records Management Software Applications Design Criteria Standard:*
http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/501502std.pdf

MoReq2, *Model Requirements for the Management of Electronic Records, second version:*
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/archival_policy/moreq/doc/moreq2_spec.pdf

OTHER RESOURCES

ARMA International
http://www.arma.org

AIIM International
http://www.aiim.org

DPlan—online disaster planning tool
http://www.dplan.org
Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC)
http://www.nedcc.org/home.php
NEDCC leaflets (includes emergency disaster information)
http://www.nedcc.org/resources/leaflets.list.php